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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 7117
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 9178
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 1940
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 2900
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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002176

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. Iran

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio reported that Hams has handed over to Israel a recent video recording of Gilad Shalit in exchange for the release by Israel of 20 female Palestinian prisoners, and that IDF Chief of

Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi has viewed the cassette. HaQaretz reported that the German mediator looked at the cassette and reported that Shalit is alive and well. The media reported that Israel will release an extra woman prisoner, since one of those of the list was already released on Wednesday as her term was up.

Leading media reported that last night the PA agreed to delay until March a vote set for today at the U.N Human Rights Council that would have endorsed the Goldstone Report. Endorsement would have opened the door for the U.S. Security Council to bring Israelis before the International Criminal Court at The Hague for prosecution Goldstone crisis averted until March. HaQaretz quoted an Israeli official as saying that the decision appears to be the results of pressure exerted by way of U.S. representatives in Geneva, as well as through contacts between Washington and Ramallah. The Obama administration has reportedly told the Palestinians that a renewal of the peace process must come before any diplomatic initiatives based on the Goldstone report, or any other initiatives that could stifle efforts to renew Israel-PA negotiations. HaQaretz quoted an Israeli official as saying that this position was coordinated with Israel. HaQaretz quoted a source as saying that the Palestinian decision not to push the report was Qproof that Israel was right not to cooperate with the commissionQs investigation and that it was a political tool that can be blocked through diplomatic activity. Yediot reported that Israel clarified to the U.S. that the Palestinian proposal will harm the pace process. Yediot quoted Israeli diplomatic sources as saying that the Palestinians have a lot to lose. Israel Radio quoted Israel's Ambassador to the U.N. institutions in Geneva, Aharon Leshno-Yaar, as saying that he received a phone call from a Palestinian diplomat who told him that the purpose of the Palestinian decision was to prevent harm to the peace process.

The Jerusalem Post reported that PM Netanyahu directed the Defense, Justice, and Foreign Ministers at yesterdayQs cabinet meeting to present him with proposals, by next week, on how to fight what he called the delegitimization of Israel that goes beyond the Goldstone Commission Report. The newspaper also reported that the IDF Judge Advocate-General will transfer the findings from the various IDF inquiries into Operation Cast Lead to Attorney-General Menachem Mazuz for a final decision on whether to press charges against soldiers.

HaQaretz reported that yesterday FM Avigdor Lieberman met with the foreign ministers of 15 different countries, and asked them to support efforts to counter the Goldstone Report. In a conversation with foreign ministers from Brazil, Russia, and the European Union among others, Lieberman warned that the report is a dangerous development that could threaten the ability of democracies to defend themselves. "This is only the first step," Lieberman was quoted as saying, adding, "the next step will be similar efforts against NATO forces in Afghanistan and Russian forces in Chechnya.

Leading media reported that yesterday President Obama presented an ultimatum to Iran, saying that it must allow inspectors into its nuclear reactor near Qom within two weeks. Maariv cited Qcautious optimismQ at the seven-party talks in Geneva. Senior Netanyahu adviser and former Pensioner Affairs Minister Rafi Eitan was quoted as saying in an interview with Maariv that President Obama has understood from the Iranian reaction that the Islamic Republic is cheating on him and that his previous approach has failed. Eitan added that he believes that IsraelQs current government will not attack Iran and that efforts should be made to handle the Iranian regime, not the Iran bomb.

Maariv cited the Israeli defense establishmentQs concern that Hamas may be bracing for a new round of fighting with Israel. Hamas is placing trailers and reportedly settling civilians a few hundred meters from the Gaza-Israel border in order to dig tunnel under the trailers.

The Jerusalem Post reported that former DM Shaul Mofaz called on PM Netanyahu to build in the controversial E-1 area between Jerusalem and MaQaleh Adumim, despite American opposition. He was visiting the side yesterday.

Leading media reported that President Shimon Peres told visiting Russian Deputy PM Victor Zubov that Iran must stop threatening

Israel that, like any other country, has to utilize its right to remain alive.

HaQaretz reported that the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee acclaimed the success of a general strike held earlier in the day in Arab communities across Israel to mark the anniversary of the October 2000 riots. Knesset Member Mohammad Barakeh (Hadash) praised the strike, saying the work stoppage "sends a clear message to the Government and to the arbiters of the racist Israeli policies that have been carried out for decades." According to Barakeh, Israel's "disgraceful" policies toward the Arab public "will lead to the explosion of the Arab sector." Barakeh warned that the strike was only the first in a series of protest actions planned by the Arab public. Following smaller events in towns where people were killed, the strike's main event was a march through Arabeh in the Galilee to the town cemetery for a wreath-laying ceremony, where Barakeh and other Knesset members spoke before thousands.

Israel Radio reported that Argentina's former president Carlos Menem was charged Thursday with obstructing a probe into the 1994 bombing of a building housing Jewish charities in Argentina that killed 85 people. The radio said that Menem faces up to 25 years imprisonment.

Yediot (Ronen Bergman) reported that it was not a conspiracy that led the Israeli Embassy to abandon Jonathan Pollard outside its gates, that successive Israeli governments were really active in promoting his release, but that they did not succeed in part due to mistakes made during the campaign.

The media reported that yesterday the Tel Aviv District Court indicted business tycoon Arkady Gaidamak and several senior Bank Hapoalim officials for laundering money through the bank and defrauding it of 650 million shekels (around \$160 million). Media reported that Gaidamak announced yesterday he would return to Israel following the indictment.

Maariv reported that the Transportation Ministry has authorized imports of U.S.-made Tesla Roadster automobiles -- for testing purposes.

HaQaretz (English Ed.) reported that Israelis seeking compensation from American businessman Abraham Enden from New York, suspected of real estate fraud, complained this week that police are not doing enough to investigate allegations against the man, who is implicated in forgery, withholding payment and libel. Complainants were quoted as saying that despite numerous fraud complaints and lawsuits in civil court against him, Enden visited Israel this week, without being called in for questioning.

11. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

11. "Only an External Probe Will Do"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (10/2): QPrime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak oppose an external investigation into the events of Cast Lead, viewing this as a no-confidence vote in the army and its probes. Instead of examining whether there is any justice to Goldstone's accusations, they are waging a diplomatic battle against him. But they are wrong. Only a commission whose members are not appointed by the government will be trusted both at home and abroad. A governmental inquiry committee, or any other body whose members are appointed by the premier or defense minister, will not enjoy the necessary degree of local and international confidence, even if it is granted real investigative powers. Only a state commission of inquiry headed by a jurist with an international reputation can address the Goldstone report with the requisite seriousness, clarify the suspicions of war crimes and lay down rules for the future. The Government must authorize the establishment of such a commission, thereby demonstrating that it has nothing to hide and no one to protect.

II. "Signs of Life"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (10/2):
QThe onus has always been on kidnappers to prove that their hostages are alive and well. Yet this week, the Government of Benjamin Netanyahu paid Hamas to do just that. While paying Hamas's price will end the Shalit family's ordeal, it will also have two perilous repercussions: some of Hamas's most able QengineersQ and tacticians will resume their careers; and the movement's standing within the Palestinian polity -- and in the international arena -- will further E solidify. Palestinians assert that Israel is holding 9,000 prisoners. If one Israeli soldier can buy 1,000 prisoners, how many will it take to deliver the other 8,000? From Hamas's vantage point, all this could not come at a better time. The Islamists, under Egyptian auspices, may soon sign a Qnational unityQ pact with Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah, paving the way for West Bank and Gaza elections in 2010. Hamas will then reasonably campaign as the QresistanceQ faction that can QdeliverQ Israeli concessions. Much as we Israelis welcome a sign of life from the soldier whose fate is so much in our hearts, it is the Government's duty to pursue his freedom mindful of the many other lives at stake down the road.

III. "Wage a Legal War"

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized (10/2):
QDespite all the justified considerations against the establishment of a commission of inquiry [into the events of Operation Cast Lead]. It should not be ruled out. The main rationale in favor of it is strategic. On the basic legal level ... an Israel commission of inquiry will earn the trust of at least IsraelQs friends and further international factors that have confidence in IsraelQs legal system. Such confidence is highly significant. Moreover, the international legal arena has become our national radar for vital strategic threats.

12. Iran:

Block Quotes:

1I. "Just DonQt Go It Alone"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (10/2): QAs an outstanding orator, Bibi did a good job [at the U.N.] in getting the sane countries to focus on Iran. Whether he is made of the leadership material to drag the country into an independent military operation against Iran is a pointless question. Iran is a threat to the sane world. Europe, the Arab states and Obama, as the leader of the world, have a problem. We must not isolate ourselves from the whole world, but operate as part of the international community, and not by any means go it alone.

II. "Is Obama a Mollusk?"

Columnist Shmuel Rosner, who was HaQaretzQs correspondent in Washington, wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (10/2): Q[Akin to some American intellectuals], very high-ranking sources in the Israeli Government believe that last summer, at the time of the disturbances in Iran, Obama missed a golden opportunity to undermine the AyatollahsQ regime. But the Obama administration no longer considers this option.... [Anyway] nothing good came for the administration from the dialogue [with Iran]. This week it turned out that even the U.S. Jews -- who are among the PresidentQs most faithful and devoted supporters Q are worried.

III. "Put Limits to Iran"

Geneva correspondent Nadav Eyal wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (10/2): QAt last weekQs dramatic press conference in

Pittsburgh, when the United States, Britain, and France announced the uncovering of the nuclear installation near Qom, President Obama took care not to present Iran with timed ultimatums. But the French President was unambiguous and strong-minded.... There was a single disastrous blow that caused the Europeans to distaste Iran -- the recent elections there.... For the first time since the [Islamic] Revolution, Europe's political and public institutions viewed the Iranian regime as almost illegitimate.

CUNNINGHAM